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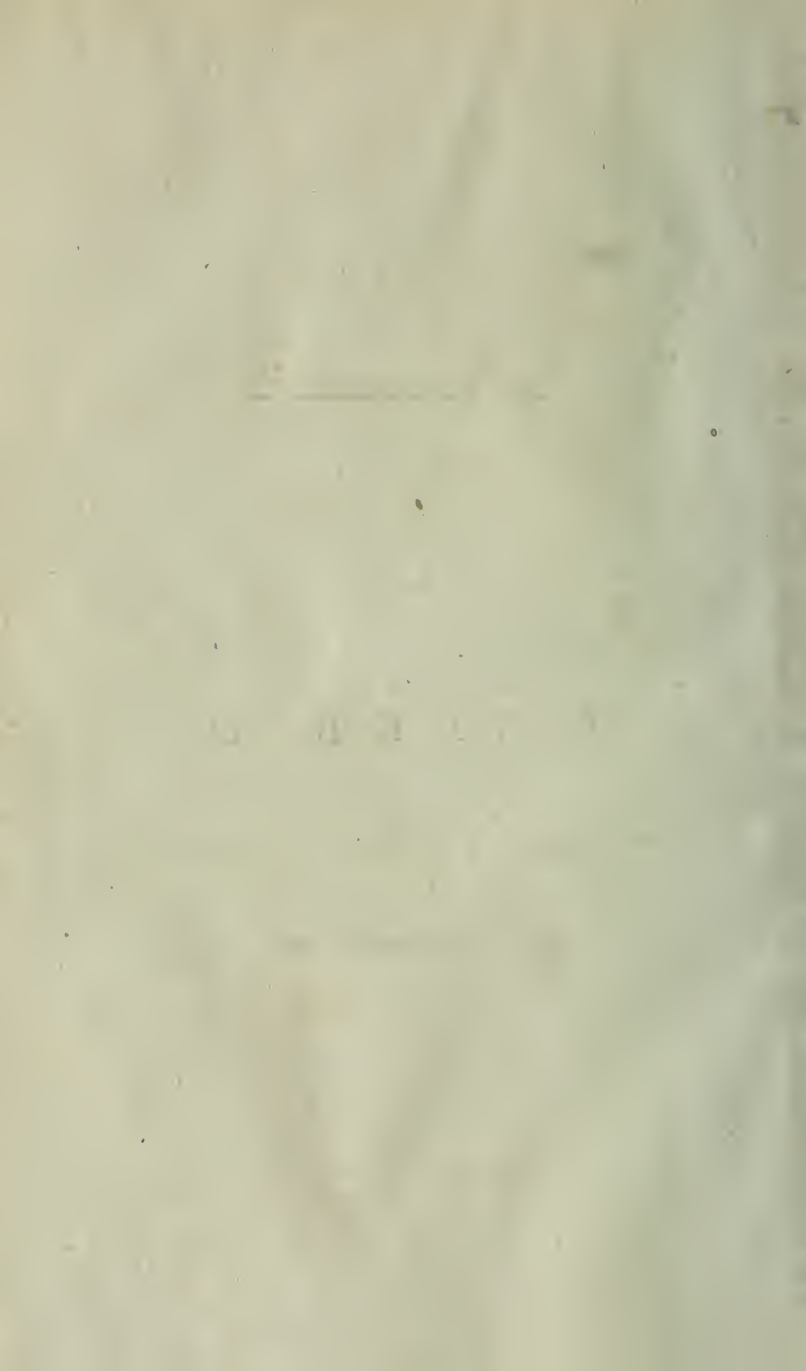


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L E T T E R, &c.

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A

L E T T E R

ON THE

NATURE AND TENDENCY

OF THE

W H I G C L U B,

AND OF

IRISH PARTY.

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—DUBLIN:—

P. BYRNE, 108, GRAFTON-STREET.

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1791.

: AC 911. 1791. 672.



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A

L E T T E R,    &c.

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DEAR SIR,

THE question upon which you have done me the honour to ask my opinion, is of so much importance to your future prospects, that if I had less leisure than I have, I should feel myself bound to answer it. But I cannot presume to give you an opinion merely; I will lay before you the reasons on which it is founded; and I request and trust, that you will be no further influenced by me, than as you feel the force of them. You speak to me of a party formed upon principle, aiming at a just reputation, and leading to no dishonourable emolument at some future period—high pretensions certainly—if they be well founded; and they seem to hold out to a young man, more than the ordinary advantages

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of

of an Irish political life. To that state, your situation, your talents, and your property, have called you—had your choice been free—but independence is not always free agency.

I should not hesitate to advise you against your interest, if your fame or the interests of your country seemed to require the sacrifice. To run the honourable risks of party, in a country where parties *must* be formed, where they are interwoven with the nature of things, where public good cannot be pursued without them, is judicious and even inevitable. The parties in England, some of them I am sure, more of them I hope, are parties founded upon principle:—They are founded upon a similarity of sentiment, on family connections, and on the more intimate alliances of esteem and friendship. In the multitudinous sea of British politics, an insulated man is nothing. Amidst the various relations which *they* bear to the civilized and uncivilized world, amidst the various questions which must arise, as to liberty, good order, war, dominion, alliances, connections, colonies, comprehending altogether such a system of thought and action, as no one understanding can combine, and no human intellect can foresee, the politician must call friendship and connection to his aid. He must provide one thing at least, necessary to a successful voyage (for it is the only thing which he can provide against every emergency) the assistance of men whom he can trust, to whom he may with confidence

confidence submit his opinion, when he has no leisure or opportunities to form it, to whom he may propose without artifice, to whom he may yield without servility, and by whose connected exertions, wisdom may be supported by power, and opinions may be moulded into system.

You will tell me, “ That your Whig Club is  
 “ built on a better basis, on specific measures of  
 “ public utility, *measures not men*—yet on men  
 “ too of high public principles. For that the  
 “ characters of men are canvassed before their  
 “ admiffion !”

If it were so in fact!—But I have read a part of your catalogue, and to tell you my plain mind, I think your Whig Club is founded neither on such men, nor such measures. Some such men I know it contains, and as to the measures, I think some of them to be not ill chosen—but I think your institution of a Whig Club the *alloy* of both. Perhaps you may find, that a number of very respectable Gentlemen, and others of a very different description, actuated by the various and discordant motives of honour, ambition, pride, vanity, disappointment, hope, connection and personal disgust, found themselves jumbled together, in a party on a sudden, and that the policy of some, the resentment of others, the old habits of not a few, and I doubt not, the real principles of many, induced them to form a measure to overturn the Irish administration. In  
 this

this league, general opposition was not bargained for, but as on the terms of their union, the doors of accommodation were shut, general opposition followed as a necessary consequence. In a country long debarred of its rights, the cause of opposition must have long been a public favourite, and government can hardly be popular, though it may be respectable, in a country which it cannot flatter, by humbling the nations of the earth at its feet. Government can do little more in Ireland, than to abstain from injury, and to let the kingdom grow. You have been restored to your rights, but you have been restored, not without an appeal to the people, and some lively instances of popular interposition. Success seldom checks vivacity, and though the causes of that interposition have passed away, the fondness for it remains. It gives to the persons concerned in it possibly some real certainty, some imaginary consequence. They can utter, at no expence, the proudest language of self-denying senators; the city will toast them through all its clubs, and the newspapers will praise them through all their paragraphs. Since your Revolution in 1782, for I will give that name to the greatest event in your history (one of the most respectable I think, in any history). This description of men has been busy enough, and by their bustle they have gained a degree of celebrity little suited to their rank or to their talents. *They* gave rise to your *Military Convention*, which was formidable indeed, till it sent forth a foolish Plan of Reform,

and

and died of the firmness of government, and of its own nonsense. *They* attempted a National Congress, but they were unequal to the task, and that project, I think, was still-born. A set of men, not unlike some personages in England, who upon the settled dispositions of the people have less effect, though perhaps they have better talents; but with you, a dangerous tribe, with whom the restless religionist, the desperate adventurer, and the secret traitor can mix with facility. It is no reproach to Ireland that it has such characters—

———Nam Catalinam

Quocunq; in populo videas, quocunq; sub axe.

Nor is it a reproach, that the circumstances of your late situation, which enabled them to mix with the useful, should give them some continued importance. But it is time that you should begin to know them—no matter to *them* what is the immediate cause of sedition, or of discontent which may lead to it. All tumult to *them* seems good, and delightful, and hopeful, and conducive to some purpose of their particular design or insanity. All opposition, to them seems good, because it may lead to something better. Defeated in their attempts against your Parliament, and unable to stand by their own strength, their natural wish was to wind themselves round the stems of some senatorial characters. Though the tree must be impaired, the creeper would be supported. In the Whig Club a new prospect opened to  
them



them. Their darling object, 'a Fourth Estate, sitting in judgment upon Parliament, from whose new popular tribunal they might issue their decrees, was not forgotten, though it seemed almost hopeless.

To a party formed upon principle, one of the first objects should have been to be *select*—if in their first association they had been found to yield a little to convenience or to necessity, I think that they ought not to have gone beyond the necessity. Persons of parliamentary consequence might perhaps be admitted, without a severe scrutiny into their conduct or principles. Yet to go very far even in *that* line, would be to give up something. A party formed upon *principle*, ought to stand upon *character*. Party connection implies a preference of those connected, to those who are without its pale; and preference cannot operate upon a change of ministry without exclusions; exclusions narrow the option of merit and ability: in England this is a necessary evil, in Ireland, I believe it to be a greater evil, but by no means so necessary. High characters your Whig Club contains undoubtedly, and men who ought to have, and perhaps may have no inconsiderable share in the government of their country. If party could be always discreet, they are men from whom I should expect the highest discretion, but I am yet to learn, what advantage they are likely to derive from so intimate a connection with some even of their parliamentary associates.

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If these latter be too few to procure success by numbers, they rather obstruct success by character. If they be useless in *producing* a change—when a change may come, they will be incumbrances—to a coalition, they will be impediments.

You will admit at least, that a party upon principle ought to stop somewhere—it should be a party *in* Parliament, and not *against* Parliament. It should avoid the peculiar vice to which the habits of the times are liable. It should exclude the rabble of country and city associations, the known disturbers of public tranquility; the men, who, to their power, make you in war suspected, and in peace ridiculous. Observe here the difference between English and Irish party. There are enough of this sort in England, and in certain associations, of much private cabal; but at present (thank God) of little public effect. Persons of an higher description may occasionally be found in their company; but have you ever heard that this set of men have been embodied with the confederated leaders of any English opposition, that they formed part of a council where the measures of party were to be devised and discussed, or that such a council had formed itself into a tribunal of appeal and censure, over the constitutional and legal tribunals of the land. It was easy to foresee, that if the doors of your society should be thrown open to persons out of Parliament, enough of those gentry would ac-

cept

cept the invitation. It seemed obvious to reflect, that if *many* were admitted, the leaders of your opposition would be soon outnumbered in their own Club, and if but a *few* were to be chosen, your party could gain neither force nor dignity by their accession. It must be as much the object of these agitators to change the nature of your Club into one of their beloved assemblies for *superintending Parliament*, as it was the interest of the Parliamentary Members to keep it pure and constitutional. The object of the leaders is probably to form an honourable administration, in which their measures would be carried, and their interests not neglected. A fair and an honorable object, and no disgrace to the respectable men who have formed a party to accomplish it. In the prosecution of their plan they were liable to one danger, to the loss of temper. Party is apt to grow angry, and anger is always unguarded. A popular cry is every where pleasant, popular instruments are every where ready, but no where so dangerous as in Ireland. The noisy might get in first, the seditious might follow. The prudent measure would have been, to have shut the door at once, and upon them all. The time might come, when they might, by such associates, be seduced or overborn to countenance something worse than tumult, to disparage the national faith, and to make a diversion in favour of the enemies of the empire in its second city. Yes—it would have been prudent to have shut the door.

What



What was my astonishment when I heard that your Whig Club had fallen *at once* into the grossest error, into which time, or unlucky circumstance, or blind violence could possibly have plunged them. The empire seemed on the brink of a war, whose principle was the protection of all its shipping and all its settlements. Fifty thousand men, and five thousand cannon, the forerunners of a greater armament, were preparing to vindicate and to protect us. War was likely, but not inevitable. The force and the unanimity of the empire might prevent it. Your Parliament had not been deficient in the general cause. It had granted a supply, trivial, if we count the coin, but valuable indeed, if enhanced by the cheap contribution of affection and tranquility. All that was generous in feeling, all that was wise in policy, forbade you to diminish your gift, or to poison the sweetness of affection, by any indiscretion. English opposition had set you no bad example—let me ask you, if this was not the very time, in which a vulgar sedition reared its foolish head in the streets of your metropolis? The authors were better versed in newspapers than in history, but had they read all the histories of rebellions, which time has transmitted to us, they could not have chosen the symbol of one more atrocious, than that which they selected. It should seem that some demon, the enemy of your honour, had instructed their untutored folly, how to extract the very essence of offence:—It was the time of doubtful war—the

very first which had menaced you after *that*, wherein you made a solemn engagement to stand or fall with Great Britain—the symbol was not only that of the bloodiest democracy which ever disgraced human nature, but of a democracy even then in arms, and whose intentions, with respect to us, were at that moment undecided. The appearances of internal disunion might encourage them to war—the symptoms of a kindred turbulence might produce offers of assistance more dangerous than their hostility. What was the motive or the pretence of this public affectation of treason? Had the ordinary tribunals of the land been subverted or shut up? Was nothing left to you, but the last resource of injured nations? No—the cause had not yet been brought into your courts—*they* were ready to receive it, and it is not impossible that the great apprehension of your incendiaries was, not that the cause might be lost, but that it might be carried. Tell me not, that these men were blundering bullies, professing crimes which they did not intend, and seeking the infamy they did not deserve. Had they sprung suddenly out of the earth, we might believe you. But they were men of no new description, no new variety of the human species. We have heard of them before, and often. Remember your National Congress, remember your Tarrers and Featherers, and the same persons come forward again like no unpraîsised incendiaries, they come with sedition in their hats and law opinions in their pockets. Their ostentation

is treason—their acts are guarded :—in their violence they are never deserted by their cunning. They know how to instigate others, and to keep themselves in security. They can prepare for the *happy moment*, threatening at once, and evading the law—this is an *old* trade. The man, by whose arts the city of London was so near its ruin, knew how to escape conviction. It is painful to recollect, that almost the same packet brought the account of those extravagancies, and of the election of their reputed authors into your Whig Club.

It is but fair to conclude, that your leaders had better grounds on which to judge of these men, and of their true characters, than what has appeared to the public. Their names have been seldom heard of, except in times of tumult. The public cannot enter into the nice variations of character ; it is apt to judge of men by what they seem publicly to profess, particularly if they profess *crimes*. Coupling the admission of the men with a publication which did not discountenance the act, (it was said to countenance it, but that was not true) it was natural to suppose, that the act itself was approved. Why was there even the semblance of such an approbation ? Why must we have a reference to the characters of truly respectable men, in order to acquit them against appearances ? The whole transaction appears unguarded, and in the extreme. The reputation of your leaders should remain un-

impeached.

impeached, but the club is contaminated. For the good of both countries, for the honour of its best members, it would be better that it should never meet again. One good, indeed, has resulted from what has happened—the general disposition of the people to loyalty and good order has been proved upon a trying occasion, without the coercion of law, or the interposition of popular authorities—the madness died away—the national cockades did not spread themselves through the land. I congratulate the nation on the experiment, and on the failure of it. It was made at the moment of expected war and of French sedition; it expired in the contempt and ridicule of a people, who, though not deaf to clamour, are not refined or corrupted by a false philosophy. The good old sentiments of loyalty are not out of fashion amongst you, they protected you as guardian angels, against a dangerous contagion, and perhaps to some they supplied the place of argument, and led them to their true interests, by a generous instinct. The most extensive view of your condition in all its complications, the soundest investigation of all your projects can give you no better maxim than this;—that the two great improvers of Ireland must be *tranquility* and *time*. Tranquility, which to England is but *enjoyment*, to you is *progress*. The angles of your contending religions are wearing away by *time*—your settlement strengthens by *time*, and by every change of property which follows time and commerce;—perhaps it at the first



first was *pillage*; it would now be *pillage* to reverse it. The poverty of your peasants, your only real misfortune, will be cured by *time*—and the progress of industry and settled law. *Time* is giving you union, and wealth, and numbers, and *they must* give you *power*;—more than you have yet to ask from nations or from ministers, will be the natural fruits of power, temperately exercised, which is *respectability*. It is not likely that this natural order of things will be obstructed. In settled peace, the loyal sentiments of the people will not be so tried and proved as they have been lately, but they will be confirmed. You are liable but to one danger—that the turbulence of some amongst you may prevent those benefits which it cannot accelerate; against this you cannot be warned too frequently, for it is not obvious to every capacity, nor agreeable to every temper, to discover how unsuitable the popular exertions of 1782 would be to the politics of the present day—they cannot be revived, and the attempt would disgrace you. Great exertions, occasioned by great causes, are born to succeed, and to redress nations; small ones are born to fail, and to strengthen governments.

The association of the wise, the mad, the honorable, and the wicked, being formed as I have described, let us endeavour to discover the natural and political tendencies of such a society. The first tendency is to encrease in numbers; selection being given up, almost at the outset, and

in so *distinguished* a manner, admission is likely to become every day more easy—exclusion to become in a short time impracticable. To shut the doors even at this moment, would be the wisest thing which could be done, but it is not the most natural thing to expect—it would be in some sort, a confession of their late imprudence, and whom can they exclude without offence, after the admission of some of their new members. Yes—I fear they will go on to the injury of themselves, and of every respectable connection in both countries. Numbers will grow on numbers, country clubs will form themselves, with or without the suggestion of the principals—committees of correspondence will follow naturally—unfuspicious and talkative patriotism, designing faction, religious rancour, beggarly outrage, and disguised treason seeking a purchaser, will be embodied through the land; judge yourself if these consequences be natural. If country clubs be *not* formed, then your Whig Club does not extend its roots through the kingdom. The whole idea of a party, whose combined and active force can shake the government must be laid aside, and if they be, what superintending genius is to preside over them, whose censorial judgment and guardian care is to sift and exclude those dangerous associates. Having yielded the reserve and chastity of their society to the embraces of—— —, at what moment are they to learn a late discretion? In the angers of a restive session, are they likely to become more guarded?

guarded? When a popular voice tickles their ears, will that be the moment of leisure and reflection? Every day, every situation, will exhibit some new temptation to them. If the popular voice be *low*, they will not be afraid to give it a little freer utterance. If it be *loud*! What!—Will they stop at the eve of victory? Having given up selection for the sake of a more extended power, will they give up that power for the sake of a tardy selection? At such a period, the greatest number of candidates are likely to offer themselves, and it is not probable that the principle of extension will be restrained, at the moment when it shall appear most likely to answer all their original purpose.

Here then we may contemplate the Whig Club in the second stage of its natural progress. The sails are full, the course strait, the crew is obedient and numerous. Force at the prow, and wisdom at the helm—Yes, at *this* period, the crew will seem to be obedient. Every resolution, every measure, will be dictated by the parliamentary leaders, and in full *seeming* they will wield at will the fierce democracy—they will find in the Whig Club a tractable help-mate, or if it rules them, it will not shew it rules. All this while the mine is practising under their feet—a confederacy branching through the land, sanctioned by the names of the respectable, and formed of all the innocent and guilty agents, which opinion, vanity, warmth, idleness and  
feditious

seditious motives, have linked together, will have accustomed itself to speak as a superintending body, depreciating Parliament, and censuring every other tribunal of the land. It will begin to censure by insinuation, it will go on to boldness—it will rather follow popular opinions than originate them, till the interference has become popular and national, and until turbulence, embodied with talents and character, has overcome the novelty of a Fourth Estate. Such is the natural progress of every self-appointed assembly, formed on *the superintending principle*—*Whig Club, Jacobines*, whatever be their names—their nature is every where the same, and their power depends no where on their own moderation, but every where upon the spirit of the times. The Whig Club, on its outset, has not been remarkably moderate, or averse to this interference. On a late division of the Privy Council, they seized an early opportunity to speak, *as a Body*, (nay, used these words) and even by anticipation—to call the cause before their own tribunal—the other tribunals were of course to sink in the public estimation. It was a little hard however, to arraign directly the decision of the courts of law, or the final determination of the House of Lords; for the cause had not yet been brought into a court of law. A temporary silence would have been no extraordinary instance of patience or moderation—I think that to have erected themselves into a court of appeal, *after* judgment, and not before it, might have satisfied new beginners.



ginners. Direct censure on those tribunals was impossible at a stage of the business in which they had yet done nothing. Insinuation, I think, was not neglected—"Our respect for *decency* prevents us from going so far as to cast a damp and despondency on appealing to the law of the land." But afterwards—"There is a farther objection, could we suppose the courts of law capable of a criminal decision, we have a ministry disposed to give them protection." I shall not dwell much upon this passage, there are inferences which are so plain, that they may be left to every understanding. It needs no comment, it contains no new species of dexterity—*without sneering*, we may *teach the rest to sneer*, and without defaming, we may teach others to defame. If I shall be told by any one, that this passage contains no impeachment of the integrity of the courts, or of the incorruptibility of the final judicature, I shall wish the gentleman much joy of his logic, and if he goes on to tell me, that it was well calculated to suggest a patient respect for the tribunals of the land, to teach the people to look to them, and not to the Whig Club; that it discouraged the more summary appeal to national cockades; that the symbol of a Parisian sedition was displayed, to discourage the people from similar outrages; I shall confess myself to be either unable or unwilling to give him an answer. It is the nature of eloquence to exaggerate, and of insinuation to imply a little too much—the best men fall or rise into these modes

of-expression, if they be men of fire and talents. I am certain that the authors of these resolutions would have turned with aversion and scorn from any man who brawled in the street, in the following manner:—"You can have little hope, if  
 " you appeal to the law of the land:  
 " your judges are corrupt, and will probably  
 " decide against you, though they know you are  
 " in the right; and they are encouraged by a  
 " government who will support their corrupt de-  
 " cision in the House of Lords, which they can  
 " influence—you had better go at once to the  
 " last resource." The words of the Whig Club, are very different from these—but insinuation is a dangerous talent, suggesting ideas which it does not express, and stealing into the mind with greater subtlety—it gives a thought and leaves imagination to work beyond it—its reserve is pregnant. *This man knows more, much more than he unfolds*—simplicity cannot guard against it; confederacies cannot long content themselves with insinuation alone, and their publications would not be the less dangerous, if they could do so; whatever be the name which they assume, Congresses or Whig Clubs (it is new to me that Whiggism in Ireland is a peculiarity) they speak in order to have effect. Governed by a party which opposes the majority of Parliament, they will speak against Parliament—if with success (and what party wishes for failure) they will be respected as an assembly, inferior indeed in law, but superior in virtue. To this end will all their first proceedings

proceedings tend, and whilst they have one great object in pursuit, to which the passions of the whole body shall be directed, they will suffer their ablest men to lead in the chace of government;—these will be the splendid days of the society.

But the time may come, when the scene and the actors are to change, and the leaders are not unlikely to become the ministers of the country. This may happen in two ways—let us first suppose that which is the most probable:—the administration in England may be changed, and the Irish friends of the present ex-minister, may be called to power, by every sentiment of gratitude and alliance, and by all the glowing affection of his nature. The stipulated measures which form their political test, may be meliorated or reformed perhaps, but be they good, or even exceptionable in many particulars, they will be carried. The respectable and valuable members will be enabled to pay off the incumbrances of party fidelity. Their friends will be welcome along with them, though perhaps, they themselves would be full as welcome without some of their parliamentary friends. But what minister, what measures can satisfy the general confederacy? What sphere will be left for their superintending activity? How will the associated corps of political theorists, the new companies of metaphicians, the independent regiments of zealots, the well dressed troop of fools, the whole infantry of  
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the disaffected, and all the non-commissioned officers of sedition and clamour, disband upon the peace of party? How will they rave at the duplicity of man, when they shall make this discovery—that their leaders having got into government, are no longer in opposition? Here I will not pretend to prophecy, for who can foretell the progress of madness—so far I may predict indeed, that in proportion as the Whig Club shall extend and rise to power and celebrity, in nearly the same proportion, the authors of it will have cause to lament the institution. I will indeed venture to prophecy this—that they will not be silent. Had you found by the practice of Ireland, that triumphant talkers had ever learned *silence* from their triumphs, I yet would venture to tell you, that such an instance is rare in human nature. But in what manner the habitual superintendency of Parliament will first display itself, whether it will evaporate after one dangerous explosion, or whether a continued wild-fire will alarm and scorch you, is beyond my powers of prediction.

Towards the event which I have supposed, the institute of a Whig Club will have contributed nothing, and the most turbulent members will be ready to give to themselves the whole credit—the parliamentary leaders cannot be seated in the offices of state, without either numerous and uncompensated dismissions, or new burdens on the country;—and the opposition which will be  
formed



formed against them, will neither want popular topics, nor popular instruments. Whether their persons will want the protection of the military, or of the police, which they will have abolished, may be problematical: but that their own instrument will recoil, that a voice will be raised against them, that the voice will be called a national one, and may appear to be so, is more than likely. To the prosperity of any country, but especially of a connected country, two things are necessary—that it should know how to oppose, and how to be satisfied: to be incapable of the latter, is to repress every generous enthusiasm in its favour. If the voice shall be raised a second time against the administration, with which the authors of the Whig Club will be connected, they may thank their own counsels for the event—they are forging the instrument of their own disquiet, and of national disreputation.

Let us come to another event, towards the production of which the Whig Club may be an efficient instrument, and for which it was probably formed and vulgarized—the Irish administration may be overthrown, the English being unshaken—and here I feel something to make me pause—for if my slight portion of reason does not deceive me, if I am about to write any thing which may dissuade sense or virtue from pursuing a dangerous course, I am also about to say what may encourage vice and violence to proceed with accelerated impetuosity. I am about to hold out  
 hopes

hopes to every seditious man, of power such as he could never expect, and of turbulence beyond his morning dream. I have the fate of the Beggar's Opera before me, which was forbidden, lest it might encourage the vice which it meant to satirize. Let us go on however, without my encouragement, the Whig Club will never want the proffered society of those who can disgrace it, either by their names or their conduct, though they may not perceive the extensive influence which may await them. Let us reason with those who are capable of expostulation—let us come then to our last supposition—the event is not a likely one, but as it is that, for which the Club appears to have been formed, as it is the great purpose for which men of great consideration have formed some alliances, in themselves not splendid, as it is the conquest for which they have stooped, let us view it in its probable consequences. We will suppose the Irish administration to be overthrown by the united engines of associated force, by a formed, active and disciplined body, branching through the land, using all the accustomed instruments of party, and acting with all the energy of an extensive confederacy—I should be sorry to wrong the authors of the Club, or their intentions—I am incapable of believing their designs to be guilty, though I am free to think them very imprudent; but if you shall be told that the overthrow of the Irish administration was but a secondary motive, and that the primary object was to carry certain bills which are made

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the test of the candidates, you will judge from facts. If these bills have been the constant desire of the leading members, conclude if you please, that an enthusiasm which over-rates their value, has devised the Club for the sake of the measures. But if you find that those bills have been directly or vehemently opposed, by some of the leading members of the Club, and by others according to their talents, you will naturally conclude, that the measures were acceded to for the sake of the association. Some measures were undoubtedly necessary to give their purpose a colour. Certain objects must be held out to the public, particularly to the public of Ireland, by any party which would engage their attention: to support a particular man, without specific measures, might have effect in England, but it is for a good reason; it is because the appointment of a particular man to the helm of the empire, is in itself a great and a productive measure. When the nation called the late Lord Chatham (then Mr. Pitt) to the administration, they called in fact for measures, though none were specified; they called for wisdom, for energy, for successful war, for a superiority over the nations of the earth; this would not be calculated for your meridian. To be an honest man and fit for this office, is in Ireland to be deserving of it. In England, nothing is so difficult as the real nature of office, and the name. The first Lord of the Treasury, may be the most punctual of treasurers, and yet totally unfit for his situation. I see no original connection

connection between the office of a Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the knowledge of finance—“ Do they understand treaties—can they direct armaments—have they minds which can embrace the world ?” These are the questions to be asked in the choice of British ministers. Perhaps it is happy for you that you need not ask such questions. In England, greatness of mind and of talents, are every thing in a minister, official practice is as nothing. Offices which are with you ministerial, are in England subordinate, and the officers are continued under every change of ministers. It is therefore no easy matter to interest the Irish nation in the preference or the exclusion of certain men, sufficiently to answer the purpose of party. The introduction of English party, and the cashiering spirit which accompanies it is new to you, and by no means necessary in itself; the exclusive preference of men must be washed down by measures, to make you swallow it; therefore your Whig Club was forced to devise measures; if they could have chosen more essential ones, I must conclude they would have done so. Those which would be most immediately conducive to their own power, do not seem to be omitted in the catalogue.

Let us then consider, how the success of the Irish confederacy would operate, if they should *force* themselves into power, connected with the English opposition, and the Irish Whig Club; how far such alliance and support is likely to affect  
public



public measures, and to mislead even the integrity of the mind, and what will be the real nature of a government so constituted? You will not be likely to confound two suppositions so essentially different in their effects, as the reconciliation of those Gentlemen to government, and their victory over it. The first, I think, devoutly to be wished; the latter, the object of the Whig Club, and the subject of this letter. Transport yourself, in imagination, to that period, when some of the best men amongst you, after the habits of an opposition, connected upon a principle new to Ireland, (the principle of subverting, not controuling the administration) and farther connected with the active body already described, shall force themselves into power and office: the British administration unshaken, the Irish administration capitulating: with how many interested, how many ignorant acclamations will the fatal machine be welcomed.

———— Pueri circum innuptæque puellæ  
Sacra canunt, —————

An administration truly Irish! brought in upon the shoulders of a popular body, relying upon popularity for its support, secure, not by servility to a Lord Lieutenant, but by a stern controul over him. No tools of a British minister, but connected with his opponents; obnoxious to the representative of the British minister who would displace them at once, if the nerve of popular exertion should be relaxed, raising the tone of

the popular voice, not only for their passions, but for their safety, allied to an active confederacy, through whose organs the blessings of liberty will be preached, and the charms of eloquence disseminated. Happy days! Popular government! Perpetual invention of new measures for the benefit of Ireland!

It will be time for that active body to know its own importance. They have followed long enough, why not lead a little now and then? The stipulated bills being passed, other objects must be looked for. The leaders have got their measures, and they have got offices—the Club (which has done every thing for them) ought to begin to consider itself a little—fresh game ought to be started, for what is a Club without resolutions? besides, a popular cry ought to be kept up, even for the sake of the popular administration; they are grown too languid, since they have become ministers, they must be spurred a little for their own good. It will be very natural for the Whig Club to address them now and then, as follows: “ My Lords and Gentlemen, “ we have a very great regard for you—you “ know very well that we made you our gover- “ nors, and if you be not supported by popu- “ larity, which is under our direction, you know “ very well that the Lord Lieutenant will turn “ you out, as soon as he dares. As to us, we “ are the most moderate men in the World, and “ extremely unlike the Jacobines of France, to “ whom

“ whom ignorant people liken us. All we insist upon is, that you will carry into effect *these plans*, and propose these motions, which are very popular, and extremely well digested?”—  
Or else!

Safer we may speculate: but who can foretell all the glories of the kingdom of the elect? The rare inventions of the discerning patriots, the auxiliary tumults, the necessary punishments of delinquents. Tar and feathers were borrowed ideas. Patriotism, directing government, ought to prove her capacity by inventing something original.

I have but one idea to oppose to this *order of things*, that from the moment wherein such a government shall prevail, Ireland will begin to diverge from Great Britain—you have broken the chains which bound you to her, and from that day you will begin to cut the filken bonds which keep you together—the connection of the two countries is through the King, and the operation and efficacy of a king is not by a magical word, but by a real power exercised by his ministers, interwoven with your system, and giving combination to all its parts. Let me ask any man who is not a mere theorist, whether the functions of the executive power be not really exercised through the medium of ministers. If the political enemies of the British executive ministers are to direct the Irish executive, what is our connection? If the union or consolidation of the two executives

executives is necessary to keep us together, are you in your senses, and will you tell me that the *hostility* of the two executives can answer the same purpose? You will indeed have a titular representative of the British executive in the person of the Lord Lieutenant: but he will have as little power as the Turkish Pacha has in Egypt, to whom the Beys of the Mamalukes hold out a signal, and he departs. To some external purposes the British minister would still have power—power to hurt you—I hope he would not use it, but it is a foolish system, that is to point the passions of the governor against the interest of the governed—it is absurd to trust negotiations in the hands of enemies. If the disposition of the British minister be above resentment, his situation will cause suspicion to rankle, and the degree of power which must remain to him, will be a source of distrust, tending to a hatred of the British connection—you will imagine he will feel your strength, as his weakness, and the growing prosperity of Ireland, as his growing antagonist—you have had enough of these suggestions scattered amongst you already, though you had not yet erected a college or a priesthood for their promulgation.

Such would be the state of things in Ireland, if your Whig Club should extend itself, as I think it will, and if it should prevail, as I think it will not. But if you ask me, whether I should not have similar apprehensions, if a party should prevail

prevail

prevail in England and govern the executive there? I answer no, I should not. First, it would not be a party so formed, nor so connected, nor so supported by any endemial distemper of the public mind; but chiefly because an English party, seizing the helm, would hold *the helm of the empire*—the unity of the executive in both countries would be preserved.

No man likes better than I do, the mutual checks and controuls which are to be found in our constitution—but it is one thing to like a controul upon the cabinet, and another thing to wish for hostilities in the cabinets, or to wish for hostile cabinets in two countries, who are to be kept together by the organ of the executive.

This unfortunate administration, built as it would be, on the shifting sand of restlessness, would receive a temporary support from the bills which are the test of admission into the Whig Club, not from the popularity which the passing such bills would gain them, (for we have seen greater measures forgotten) but from the solid power which these bills are calculated to confer upon the oligarchy. It is a new thing to see measures held out as a public boon, which would directly operate for the particular benefit of the proposers, popularity is generally sought by sacrifices, and not by assumptions—the bill for limiting pensions, seems to me to be grounded on a rational principle,  
applicable



applicable to every monarchy—it is opposed by your present government, probably, because it would be a restraint upon them. They are bound in honor not to displace the present pensioners, and if the list was limited, they might have no pensions to grant—If they meant not to increase the list, they would wish to have some credit for their forbearance—it is therefore very natural they should not like the bill, whether they do or do not intend to misuse their power—but to a party coming in, on the principle of dismissing others, I think the pension bill limited, in the manner proposed in the last session of your Parliament, *would be ready money*. The proposal was, to limit the list to 80,000 pounds, *per annum*, exclusive of pensions to the Royal Family or by Parliament. Now it is obvious, that the striking off a few of the pensions of their opponents, would leave vacancies in the 80,000l. for their friends. The bill too says, that no pensioner during pleasure, shall sit in Parliament—so much the better for their friends—they have tried those friends who are in Parliament, who deserve pensions for life, and who can take none others. In a country where long years of party urge *their destined course*, this independent provision for their friends would be very convenient: it would be honorable—but the bill is not disinterested.

The responsibility bill would add to their power more materially, though not by any means so obviously—the moment that bill shall be passed, the Lord Lieutenant cannot issue

a shilling out of the produce of the revenue additional or hereditary, without the signature of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and of other officers. In the appointment to offices these are not amongst the offices likely to be forgotten—it would be unjust that these officers were to be responsible for expenditure, if they were not to judge of the propriety of it; of course they are to judge and to decide—what then is the Lord Lieutenant?

The repeal of the police bill, may restore to full power the principal and notorious instruments of popular turbulence—the bill of repeal or reformation, has been kept back—we will judge of it when we see it, perhaps it may, and perhaps it may not, leave the Lord Lieutenant and his friends at the mercy of the populace—they were so once, and a brave man of a brave family, was not terrified or banished by their outrages—beauty and the graces, were indeed compelled to fly, but that was a time when party was not rife or embodied. The leaders of sedition herded only with associates who were fit for them.

Here we see three things preparing, all of them applicable to the strength of party—gratification of friends—chains upon the Lord Lieutenant held by themselves—the security of his person, and of the seat of government, left dependant upon their instruments. Want of forecast is certainly not the objection to these projects; if they have a fault in their policy, it is that there is too much *address* in the conception

conception of them; it is the nature of man to wish for power, and of good men to believe they will never misuse it—I know no men more fit to be entrusted than some amongst you, but I must lament, that they are not more fortunate in some of their associates, and that in the consciousness of their own worth, they have almost sought temptations: the name of one of them will live for ever, and of others, I think very highly, but to wish them success, would be to wish them danger—danger to themselves, to their nation, and to every connection in England that they regard or cultivate.

I have supposed this Club to increase and to succeed, and the administration of the country to be laid at their feet—whilst the intercourse of mutual distrust and hatred will take its course, between the conquered viceroy and the new and victorious cabinet—whilst that cabinet will be employed in yielding to, or parrying the superintending turbulence of their own agents, whilst those agents will be occupied in the enjoyment and abuse of their acquired power, the nation is not likely to improve, either in condition or in sentiment. Universal jealousy, local tumults, faction a trade, inflammation a science, treason disguised and busy, sectaries certainly not idle, England suspected, the administration of England hostile, the rancour of party poisoning polished society, disturbing the inferior orders, debasing the public mind, and destroying the national character: these are but the seeds of the poisonous plants which will be sown; the hot and fertile soil of party may produce



produce new species, of a larger growth, and of more quick and subtle qualities. All this while, the English friends of the new Irish cabinet, will incur no trivial censure, and will not reap the smallest advantage; the disturbed state of Ireland, attributed to their connected friends, will be no recommendation of them to the British Nation—Ireland cannot displace a British minister—an English opposition may wish for a bad treaty or an unsuccessful war, if they be unprincipled, for these events might serve them personally; but they cannot wish for disturbance in Ireland, unless they be *foolish*—it would be of no more advantage to them than lightning, which would destroy the fleet, or pestilence that would thin the people. The best council which they can give to their Irish friends, is to follow the fortunes of Great Britain, which they indeed may impair, but which they cannot direct. It is the interest of every British administration to receive Ireland connected in wish and feelings with Great Britain itself, and not with any British party, tranquil and in good order, It is the interest of Ireland, that every British party should deem the prosperity of Ireland to be an accession to the strength of the empire, and no impediment or danger to themselves. This opinion being fixed and established, (it was so till very lately, I hope it is not yet much shaken) will be of more advantage to you than all the projects which genius may in-

vent, or eloquence may render popular. To preserve this opinion, you should eradicate English party from amongst you, even to the idea of it. An oligarchy, connected with English party, may obtain or may accelerate the passing of a bill; which you may be taught to value beyond its deserts, but it will tend to cancel those formed opinions and fixed reliances which you have established, and which are necessary even to your security—Lord Lieutenants may hurt you a little, for I know of no perfect governments; vexed by an oligarchy only, you may be undone.

If you approve of the bills which the Whig Club have offered to the nation, you can support the bills, or such of them as you approve, without being drawn into the vortex of the confederacy—you can do so without exposing yourself to the contagion of a party spirit—you can maintain your integrity, without giving up your independence, without associating with the worst, or being enslaved to a factious alliance, which tends to pervert the best—Unconnected independence, which in England would be but useless singularity, would in the present state of Irish politics be real consequence—you will then be able to weigh in an unbiassed mind, the value of the measures proposed, and the dangers arising from the means which are employed—perhaps too you may be of opinion, that the measures themselves are not those which would most naturally occur to enlightened

lightened patriotism—consider the following measures :

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All these may not be practicable, perhaps they may not all be eligible—to judge of their propriety, or of the time in which they should be proposed, you will judge not only of their intrinsic value, but of the state of the country, of the relation which she bears to others, of the spirit of the times, and of the effects of the propositions you may bring forward, if those propositions should fail, as well as if they should succeed.

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If you think this letter can be of any service, and will take the trouble to erase the passages I have marked, you are at liberty to communicate the remainder.

I am, &c. &c. &c.











